

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Sub 1  
109. (Currently Amended) A method of connecting two parties in real time, the method comprising:

displaying a list of service providers to a customer via an internet connection with the customer prior to the customer submitting a question;

F1  
providing the customer with an option to view in ascending or descending order, the list of service providers according to one of a group consisting of price, availability, and customer evaluations;

the list indicating individually whether each service provider in the list of service providers is currently available to telephonically communicate with the customer at a time when the customer is viewing the list;

receiving a customer selection of a displayed icon corresponding to a service provider from the list; and

a controller computer using the selection from the customer to initiate a process of establishing a telephonic connection between the service provider and the customer prior to the customer submitting a question to the service provider, wherein the process of establishing the telephonic connection includes at least

subsequently prompting the customer as to whether the customer wants to establish the telephonic connection with the service provider from the list;

the process of establishing the telephonic connection further includes the controller computer placing a telephone call to the service provider, and the controller computer placing a telephone call to customer.

110. (Previously Presented) The method as described in claim 109, further comprising, after establishing the telephonic connection between the service provider and the customer, changing the indication of the current availability status for the service provider.

111. (Previously Presented) The method as described in claim 109, further comprising, after the telephonic connection has ended, prompting the customer to evaluate the service provider.

112. (Previously Presented) The method as described in claim 109, wherein the list is provided in response to a category selection.

113. (Previously Presented) The method as described in claim 109, wherein the service provider and the customer each have a telephone number, and the telephonic connection is established without disclosing the telephone number of

the service provider to the customer and without disclosing the telephone number of the customer to the service provider.

114. (Previously Presented) The method as described in claim 109, further comprising, tracking how long the telephonic connection is maintained between the service provider and the customer; and

billing the customer based upon how long the telephonic connection is maintained.

115. (Previously Presented) The method as described in claim 109, further comprising:

before providing the list, setting up an account for the service provider;

and

crediting the account for an amount based upon how long the telephonic connection is maintained.

116. (Previously Presented) The method as described in claim 109, further comprising, before providing the list, setting up a customer account for the customer.

117. (Previously Presented) The method as described in claim 109, further comprising:

tracking how long the telephonic connection is maintained between the service provider and the customer; and

while the telephonic connection is being maintained, notifying the customer in real time of a balance in the customer account.

118. (Previously Presented) The method as described in claim 109, further comprising:

tracking how long the telephonic connection is maintained between the service provider and the customer; and

deducting from the customer account an amount based upon how long the telephonic connection is maintained.

119. (Currently Amended) A controller computer for connecting two parties in real time, the computer comprising:

a database to store information about a plurality of service providers;

a first logic unit linked with the database to provide a list of service providers to a customer prior to the customer submitting a question, the customer provided with an option to view, In ascending or descending order, the list of service providers according to one of a group consisting of price,

availability, and customer evaluations, the list including an indication of whether a service provider is currently available at a time the customer is viewing the list;

a second logic unit linked with the database to receive a customer selection of a displayed icon corresponding to a service provider from the list; and

the second logic unit further to use the selection from the customer to initiate a process of establishing a telephonic connection between the service provider and the customer prior to the customer submitting a question to the service provider, wherein the process of establishing the telephonic connection includes at least subsequently prompting the customer as to whether the customer wants to establish the telephonic connection with the service provider from the list;



the process of establishing the telephonic connection further includes the second logic unit placing a telephone call to the service provider and the second logic unit placing a telephone call to customer establish.

120. (Previously Presented) The computer as described in claim 119, wherein the controller computer has a third logic unit to prompt the customer to provide an evaluation of the service provider after the service provider and the customer the telephonic connection has ended.

121. (Previously Presented) The computer as described in claim 119, wherein the second logic unit changes the indication of the current availability status for the

service provider after the telephonic connection between the customer and the service provider has been established.

122. (Previously Presented) The computer as described in claim 119, wherein the service provider and the customer each have a telephone number, and the second logic unit establishes the telephone connection without disclosing the telephone number of the service provider to the customer and without disclosing the telephone number of the customer to the service provider.

  
  
123. (Previously Presented) The computer as described in claim 119, wherein the controller computer has a third logic unit to track how long the telephonic connection is maintained between the customer and the service provider; and  
a fourth logic unit to bill the customer based upon how long the telephonic connection is maintained.

124. (Previously Presented) The computer as described in claim 119, wherein the database further stores information about an account set up for the service provider, and the controller computer has a fourth logic unit linked with the database to credit the account for an amount based upon how long the telephonic connection is maintained.

125. (Previously Presented) The computer as described in claim 119, wherein the database stores information about a customer account set up for the customer.

126. (Previously Presented) The computer as described in claim 119, wherein the controller computer has:

a third logic unit to track how long the telephonic connection is maintained between the customer and the service provider; and

a fourth logic unit linked with the database to notify the customer in real time of a balance in the customer account.

127. (Previously Presented) The computer as described in claim 119, wherein the controller computer has:

a third logic unit to track how long the telephonic connection is maintained between the customer and the service provider; and

a fourth logic unit linked with the database to deduct from the customer account an amount based upon how long the telephonic connection is maintained.

128. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium having stored thereon instructions which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to:

display a list of service providers to a customer via an internet connection with the customer prior to the customer submitting a question, the customer provided with an option to view, In ascending or descending order, the list of service providers according to one of a group consisting of price, availability, and customer evaluations, the list indicating individually whether each service provider in the list of service providers is currently available to telephonically communicate with the customer at a time when the customer is viewing the list;

receive a customer selection of a displayed icon corresponding to a service provider from the list; and

a controller computer use the selection from the customer to initiate a process of establishing a telephonic connection between the service provider and the customer prior to the customer submitting a question to the service provider, wherein the process of establishing the telephonic connection includes at least subsequently prompting the customer as to whether the customer wants to establish the telephonic connection with the service provider from the list;

the process of establishing the telephonic connection further includes the controller computer placing a telephone call to the service provider, and the controller computer placing a telephone call to customer.

129. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 128, having stored thereon instructions that further cause the computer to



change the indication of the current availability status for the service provider after the telephonic connection is established.

130. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 128, having stored thereon instructions that further cause the computer to prompt the customer to evaluate the service provider after the service provider has finished communicating with the customer.

131. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 128, having stored thereon instructions that further cause the computer to track how long the telephonic connection is maintained between the service provider and the customer.

132. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 128, having stored thereon instructions that further cause the computer to bill the customer based upon how long the telephonic connection is maintained.

133. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 128, having stored thereon instructions that further cause the computer to:  
set up a customer account for the customer; and

notify the customer in real time of a balance in the customer account while the telephonic connection is being maintained.

134. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 128, having stored thereon instructions that further cause the computer to:

set up a customer account for the customer; and

deduct from the customer account an amount based upon how long the telephonic connection is maintained.

135. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 128, having stored thereon instructions that further cause the computer to:

set-up an account for the service provider; and

credit the account for an amount based upon how long the telephonic connection is maintained.

136. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 128, wherein the service provider and the customer each have a telephone number, and instructions stored on the computer-readable medium cause the computer to establish the telephone connection without disclosing the telephone number of the service provider to the customer and without disclosing the telephone number of the customer to the service provider.